Maltese in the Benelux

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of
Masters preparatory with specialisation in History,
University of Malta

May, 2013
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Abstract

This dissertation aims to investigate the situation of the Maltese who have lived and are living in the Low Countries, recently known as the Benelux. Malta’s entry into the European Union has brought to my attention the ever increasing Maltese presence in Europe. The author chose the Benelux because unlike Malta, which lies in Southern Europe, the region lies in northwest Europe, and therefore the lives of the Maltese in the Benelux, the author assumes, would have developed differently to those of Maltese people living in their homeland. Moreover, it was also intriguing to research the lives of Maltese living in three neighbouring countries with different motives during the years. In this way I hope to highlight the problems the Maltese communities in the Benelux have faced throughout the years.

To find information and sources with regards to the Maltese in the Benelux, the author reviewed several primary historical and contemporary sources, throughout Malta, Belgium and the Netherlands. The sources were mainly several documents, passports, journals, and newspaper articles. Moreover, in order to analyse recent topics, the research included a series of questionnaires with Maltese nationals residing in the Benelux so that the validity of this study would be concluded with current details.

The dissertation will show the variety of reasons why Maltese have chosen to work in the Benelux. Reasons which were unknown, or else forgotten through time as in many of the historical cases. As a result one can see the evolution of purposes for migrating to the Benelux. For example Maltese who went to Belgium, when Malta was a British colony, went there as part of a military force or out of despair hoping for a better future. On the other hand, contemporary Malta emigrants to Belgium go there in search of employment.

The study was conducted using a historical approach which has served to support the idea that despite the Benelux region being geographically far from the Mediterranean, a Maltese presence there was still found in the first part of the
seventeenth century, and while no documentation has been discovered by the author to establish whether this presence was there even earlier, there is a possibility of a Maltese presence in the Benelux before the seventeenth century.

The data uncovered sheds light on several conclusions about the study. Firstly, one must emphasize the political and economic opportunities the Benelux plays for several Maltese who work in the Benelux countries. Secondly, the study brings out the role of embassies and dialogue in enhancing the lives of present emigrants in the Benelux and the possibility of encouraging further emigration through several mediums such as community organisations, trade, and sports. Lastly, the social lives of Maltese will be examined not only in the light of how they fit into statistics and figures, but also in analysing different scopes and reasons for them living there. In fact statistics in graphs show the importance of the Benelux for Maltese who would like to reside there. This dissertation will follow a chronological pattern, featuring all newly discovered events.
Acknowledgements

This dissertation relied heavily on documented sources, but also most importantly on people who either knew about the subject or else worked in the area of research. Firstly I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Henry Frendo for his support and guidelines. Special thanks go also to my family for their patience and encouragement throughout these months, and my friends who supported me.

Recent knowledge about the subject can also be attributed to several local Maltese people, who contributed by doing their utmost and sharing their knowledge with the author. These are Franklin Mamo, Joseph Chircop, Martin Valentino, Jen-Francois Delahaut, Luigi Dalli, Mark Caruana, Martin Bugelli, Angelo Chetcuti, Joseph Darmanin, Fr, Alfred Vella, Fr Philip Calleja, Dr. Alexander Cachia Zammit, Omar Cutajar, Claire Attard, Sergio Portelli, Anna Bardon and Gabi Sultana,

Many researchers and librarians have helped the author throughout the research required which was difficult to find. In particular credit goes to those researchers and librarians in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Thus the author expresses gratitude to Eric Hennekam, Jan Caluwert, Hubert Barnich, Henk van Kampen, Christian Vreugde, Ramses Peters, Vefie Poels, Goran Pravilovic, Corinne Boeijinga-Hubers, Rene M. Haubourdin, Gregory Molitor, Filip Strubbe, Marie Juliette Marinus, Daniel Fiott, Cecile Cuypers, Erik Vloeberghs, Anna Pecsi, Car Koojiman and Corinne Schoeder who guided the author in his search for specific documents and other valuable information.

A special thanks goes to Michel Spiteri who took the task of reading each chapter after it was completed. Moreover, the author would also like to thank others who without knowing, through their professions, have contributed in making this research possible.
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Benelux</td>
<td>States comprising Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg</td>
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<td>BOV</td>
<td>Bank of Valletta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eurostat</td>
<td>Statistical Office of the European Communities</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>Europol</td>
<td>European Police Office</td>
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<td>Eurojust</td>
<td>Judicial agency of the European Union</td>
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<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East North Africa</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>VOC</td>
<td><em>Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie</em> (Dutch East India Company)</td>
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

The Benelux region has quite a long history of immigration. In fact immigration policy was on the agenda during the Benelux summit of March 2001. The goal of the summit was to have a common immigration and asylum policy for Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. The latter is the smallest country out of the three and is also landlocked. Despite being small in size, it is still a prominent EU member state. In the mid-19th century Luxembourg was mainly a poor agricultural country with many Luxembourgian nationals emigrating to France and the United States and with workers from Germany and Italy being recruited temporarily in the iron industry by the end of the century to fill the void. It was during the twentieth century that Luxembourg came in need of immigrants and accepted only white, Catholic Europeans mainly from Portugal and Italy. The current labour immigration policy is based on the legislation of March 1972, which does not distinguish between workers who are skilled or unskilled and which disallows non-EU members to bring over their immediate family members to live or work there. However, during the 90s, Luxembourg received Muslim, non EU immigrants mainly in the form of people fleeing the Balkans to escape the Kosovo war. Then in the spring of 2001 asylum seekers from non EU countries who were usually Muslim and who had been previously rejected were allowed to stay. By 2002 the Government started repatriating Muslim migrants whose cases had been dismissed. Despite pressure from NGOs the Government still opposes illegal immigration and seems to allow only foreigners who are predominantly European and Catholic. As of 2012, there

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1 Le Boire, Benelux countries to coordinate immigration policy, retrieved on 12 April 2013 from http://www.novabelgica.org/newsletters/news_016_05.htm
3 Ibid, Size and Nationality of the Population of Luxembourg, 1871 to 2001
4 Ibid, Recent Immigration Policy
5 Ibid.
were 229,870 foreign nationals residing in the country who mainly come from EU member states.⁶

Belgium, on the other hand, began to attract an inflow of immigrant labourers after World War Two (WWII), and especially in the 1960s. As a result bilateral agreements were made with Turkey, Southern Europe, and North Africa and flexible-working permits and good social conditions were offered to these immigrants up to 1974, when these agreements were cancelled due to the international recession.⁷ In the 1950s Belgium had started to serve as the Capital of the European Union serving as the venue for several EU Institutions. As a result, non EU nationals tended to naturalise themselves more quickly than EU nationals. Statistics show that Italians, French and Dutch constitute more than 40 percent of the immigrant population, while Moroccans and Turks add up to twelve percent of the immigrant population. Therefore, the Belgian population is not only characterised by a cosmopolitan population due to the different nationalities who have settled there, but also by a large number of mostly North African and Turks who have been granted Belgian citizenship. In fact 38 percent of the ‘Belgian’ population of Antwerp is of foreign origin, while the foreign population makes up 18 percent. When it comes to Brussels, 62 percent are of foreign origin, but the official figures claim only 31 percent have a foreign status.

The case of the Netherlands is not so different to that of Belgium either. Since the Middle Ages the good economic stability the country always offered has drawn a considerable amount of immigrants. In fact between 1590 and 1800 the foreign population in the Netherlands was never less than 5 percent, which was made up mostly of French Protestants and Southern or Eastern European Jews.⁸ The post-war migration was dominated by immigrants from the Netherlands’ former colonies,

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⁸ www.focus-migration.de. ‘Netherlands’ Historical trends in Immigration and Emigration retrieved on 13 April 2013 from http://focus-migration.hwwi.de/The-Netherlands.2644.0.html?L=1
mostly from Indonesia. In the 1960s like in Belgium, the Dutch Government was recruiting Southern European and later Turkish and Moroccan workers. Many of the Southern Europeans returned home, but the Turks and Moroccans stayed there. By the 1990s many of those immigrating to the Netherlands came from the Dutch Caribbean Islands, but they still did not solve their poverty problem, since they found no opportunities there. In 1996 about 100,000 immigrants arrived in the Netherlands. In fact the Dutch population is growing by approximately 50,000 a year solely because of immigration. Most of the immigrants are Turks, Moroccans and Surinamese (Caribbean). Like the situation in Belgium, officially, the number of immigrants decreases because of the naturalisation process making immigrant ethnic groups instantly “Dutch”. 44 percent of the population of Amsterdam is foreign and many are projecting that by 2015, the number will increase to 50 percent.

It is in this situation that the Maltese emigration forms a tiny part of the current figures in the Benelux, but Maltese presence to the region is still going strong. Maltese emigration to the Benelux can be considered to follow the European pattern. Despite the fact that there is an increasing population, the Maltese emigrant will still remain Maltese, unlike the North African one who as previously explained will be easily naturalised. Maltese emigration to the Benelux countries is interesting not only because of the cultural differences between the two nationalities, but also because of the fact that historically there has been no attachment whatsoever with the Benelux. Maltese emigrants to either Italy or Great Britain have seen similarities between Malta and these two countries, but in this case, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg are three countries which do not have any intimate connection with Malta. It is only recently, with Malta’s accession to the European Union that Brussels has become closer to Maltese politics.

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9 Ulbe Bosma, *Post-Colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands* ‘Chapter 1: Post Colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands’ (Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2012)

Chapter 2 - The first Maltese traces in the Benelux

Very little is known of the Maltese who ventured to the Benelux from late Medieval to Modern times. There seems to be an idea that a Maltese presence in that part of Europe was pretty much nonexistent during those times. Despite that there have been no frequent emigrations, results pretty much prove otherwise. There are several cases of various Maltese individuals who departed there for personal reasons.

Throughout history, Malta witnessed a considerable amount of people leaving the island for a better future in foreign countries. It is very difficult to trace whether there was a fixed emigration route to the Benelux countries. This is because one could have visited France and then arrived at his final destination in the Benelux via an overland trip. Unfortunately, the documents stated that the traveller would have visited France and not mentioned if there was some other country which was visited once he had arrived there. Moreover, there are many cases where the emigrant or traveller’s destination was listed as ‘Europe’. Considering the fact that England, France, Italy and Spain are all mentioned as regular destination points, Europe could mean Germany, Austria, Belgium, Holland, or Switzerland since these countries all lie in central Europe.

2:1 - The Adventures of Giovan Francesco Buonamico

Giovan Francesco Buonamico, a Maltese intellectual, visited some of the most beautiful cities in the world in the 1660s. From 1660 to 1663 Buonamico toured several European cities and kept a detailed account of what he saw. Born in 1639, apart from being a traveller, Buonamico loved culture and was fluent in Latin. He was also a poet and a medical doctor by profession.\footnote{Arnold Cassola, \textit{The Belgian Memoirs of a Maltese Intellectual: Giovan Francesco Buonamico (1639 – 1680}} (Malta, BOV, 2012)\textit{)}
In his unpublished work called ‘Memorie de viaggi di Giovan Francesco Buonamico nella Francia, Germania, Olando, Fiandra, Lorena, Svizzera, Italia, Sicilia, spigge e varie isole della Grecia. Dall’Anno 1657 sin’ al’ 1666’ Buonamico gives a very detailed account of his journey throughout Europe describing in special detail his visit in the Benelux, particularly Belgium.

From the first voyage, Buonamico states that he first lived for some time in Amsterdam and then for a considerable time in Louvain. Despite the fact that it is believed that Buonamico attended the University of Louvain for two years he does not give a detailed description of the place. The journey starts with a month’s voyage starting on 28 August 1657 on a German ship to the port of Toulon. On 29 September of the same year, Buonamico left Toulon by horse, where he visited different French cities until he stayed in Paris for practically a year and a half. By 24 May he crossed to Sedan, and despite being fully aware that one should not travel alone he crossed the biggest forest in the entire area of ancient Gaul; the Ardenne Forest. He arrived in Liege and then he moved on to Maastritch, Aachen, Koblenz, Mainz, Worms and other towns in Germany, where he spent a couple of months. By 5 March 1661 he entered Switzerland where he once again visited major cities there. By 12 April 1661 he returned to Aachen. By 26 May 1661 he moved to Holland where he resided for two years whilst visiting The Hague, Delft, Dordecht, and Middelburg.

Buonamico finally arrived in the Belgian towns which he seemed to like to visit most. He stopped in Bruges, Ghent, Aalst, Brussels, Malines and Antwerp. In Bruges, Buonamico noticed that the city had lost its primacy to other cities because of its inhabitants’ pride. Previously, back in the fifteenth century Bruges enjoyed being the most commercial and richest city in the region. However the locals, due to pride drove all foreign merchants out, from Bruges to Antwerp, and then to Amsterdam. Despite this historical fact, it still was the most beautiful city, since public and private buildings were unique due to their Gothic style. Buonamico also considered Bruges

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
to be unsafe since there was no adequate military fortification to protect it from a military attack. He then left for a short stay in Ghent. Afterwards, he left for a one day trip to Brussels by coach. Buonamico considered Brussels to be the most prestigious city of that time, arguing fully well that it should have been given more status than it actually had, even though it was the home of many princes from Charles V’s reign. After Brussels, Buonamico left for Malines until he finally settled for a couple of months in Antwerp. Out of all the cities he visited, Buonamico stated that Antwerp had all the combinations and features of any European city.

From Giovan Francesco Buonamico’s accounts one can see the perspective of a Maltese national on the Belgian and Dutch people, lifestyle and architecture during the late seventeenth century. For example when in Bouillon, Buonamico mentions two different types of popular beverages. He mentions a chocolate drink and beer. The latter is still very common up till this very day. It is also evident that from Buonamico’s descriptions beer was still not common in Malta or even in Southern Europe. When in Liege he noticed that the language spoken sounded more French, despite having some Flemish and Germanic elements in it. Moreover, the locals there seemed to be of Southern European origin, mostly Italian, due to their physical features and short temper.\(^\text{14}\)

One can notice that Giovan Francesco Buonamico was fully aware of history. In fact one can consider Buonamico’s work as a historical reference point because he gives some descriptions of some events that occurred before his arrival. One of them is an event in 1369, when some Jews viciously attacked the Holy Eucharist with a knife. They would later be caught and as a consequence burnt at the stake. This event would be later called the “Brussels Massacre”. Buonamico also gave some architectural description of the places he visited like fortifications, palaces, and churches which filled the Benelux during that time.

Without any doubt Buonamico was proud of his Maltese heritage but from his work he showed that he was also a ‘great European’. He can thus be considered a

\(^\text{14}\) Ibid.
Maltese ambassador to Belgium and the Netherlands, since he ventured into Northern Europe and did not stay in traditional Southern European areas like Italy or Southern France. It practically took Buonamico six years to tour major parts of central Europe.

**Illustration 1** – Portrait of Giovan Francesco Buonamico

2:2 – The first known Maltese visit to the Netherlands

Several Dutch surnames which seem to have a Maltese connection appear as early as the seventeenth century. Surnames like ‘Malta’, ‘Van Malta’, ‘Maltha’ and ‘Van Maltha’ are food for thought when it comes to their origins. Despite the names apparently being linked to Malta, there is no final conclusion as to where these surnames originated from. There is a probability that they either originated from the French name ‘Maloteau’,\(^{15}\) or else that they could have been given as a surname to Maltese nationals living in the Netherlands due to difficulties in pronunciation. In fact there are two cases of Maltese people who enlisted in Dutch-Asiatic shipping and

\(^{15}\) Malotaux, Malta: Patr. Dim. van Malot, dim. van Germ. malthal-naam. Malta geeft de Waalse uitspraak weer.1162 Gerard Malot, Egmond (GYSS. 1999’); 1552 Carolus Maloteau, Namen
were given the surname ‘Malta’ due to the fact that they were Maltese.16 This surname is called a ‘toponym’ since it is derived according to geography. ‘Toponyms’ where also given to show what was owned, such as lands and houses.17 The surname ‘Malta’ seemed to be quite common in Rotterdam during the 1700s but could also be seen as early as 1646, when it was recorded that a certain Willem Malta from Maastricht married Aryen Teunisz Loff.18

Apart from the problem of establishing whether the above surnames belonged to Maltese nationals, it is very hard to find a trace of the whereabouts of any Maltese living in the Benelux countries during the seventeenth century. We regard Giovan Francesco Buonamico as the first Maltese national to visit this region because of his accounts, though he wasn’t. On 6 March 1632 a certain Johan Domingo Stivala visited the Netherlands due to his involvement in the Tobacco business.19 Domingo Stivala seems to have been a merchant trying to purchase tobacco which he could transport back to Malta. Involved with him were the Englishmen William Adkinson, and Dirck Block.20 Robbrecht Pauler and Michiel Cornelisz.21 Moreover, the receipt22 recorded in the notary records claims that there was a problem regarding the amount of tobacco purchased. On 3 November 1652, a Knight of the Order of St John, who though not Maltese by birth, was resident in Malta, and formed part of the religious order that ruled the island, also visited the Netherlands for business

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16 National Archives of the Netherlands, Number access: 04/01/02, inventory numbers: 12869,14397, folio: 81, 165,
18 National Archives of Rotterdam, Netherlands, Notarial Deeds, (Not. Jacobus Delphius)Inventory number:93 serial number: 95/149
19 National Archives Rotterdam, Netherlands, Notarial Deeds, (Not. Jan van Aller Az) Inventory number:93, serial number: 93, 95/149
20 Ibid.
21 While the nationality of the latter two individuals might have been listed in the document being reviewed, since it was written in Old Dutch, the author had a problem decapitating it and therefore for the purpose of this study their nationality is not being mentioned. However, the author has found no documentary evidence which shows that these surnames existed in Malta at the time.
22 National Archives Rotterdam, Netherlands, Notarial Deeds, (Not Jan van Aller Az) Inventory number: 93, serial number: 93, 95/149
purposes. Heromimus Columna, sold an amount of pistols for which he received 2292 florins.\textsuperscript{23}

Illustration 2 – Map published by Nicolaas Visscher II

Visscher (1649 – 1702), a Dutch cartographer and publisher, knew about Malta due to the island’s reputation of protecting the Mediterranean Sea against the Ottoman fleet.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, (Not. Christiaan van Vliet) Inventory number: 3840, serial number: 3840, 143/403

\textsuperscript{24} Atlas Van der Hagen, Royal Library, The Hague, 1049B12_087
Illustration 3 – Intolerance of the Knights towards the Maltese people

These are two illustrations drawn in 1702 by Jan and Casper Luyken, two Dutch painters who were brothers living in Amsterdam.\textsuperscript{25}

Illustration 4 – A religious procession in Malta

\textsuperscript{25} Amsterdam Museum, A19532, Jan Luyken, Casper Luyken, 1702
Chapter 3 - Maltese Sea Voyagers with the Dutch East India Company

From the period 1649 till 1794 there were 64 cases of Maltese sailors who served with the Dutch East India Company. The Dutch East India Company was a chartered company founded in 1602 in order to carry out colonial activities in Asia. It not only carried out trade and negotiated treaties, but also gained new colonies, waged war and executed convicts. The Dutch East India Company enjoyed a monopoly at sea, which resulted in the Dutch Stock Market making huge profits throughout the seventeenth Century. Many of those who enlisted in sea voyaging to Asia were the dregs of Dutch society who were mostly rough and to a certain extent also barbaric. Recruited with the Dutch army were a high number of foreigners who came mostly from Germany, Switzerland, France, England, Scotland, Ireland and Denmark. Amongst those foreigners there were some who happened to be Maltese. There are no detailed accounts of what went on during their voyage in Dutch ships, but due to first hand records one can view information regarding the sea voyagers recruited, what names they were given, their nationality, the type of occupation they were given, the ship they sailed on, the date and reason for the termination of employment, where they ended their tenure of service, and whether they had a debenture (contract).

26 National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers Number access: 04/01/02
27 John Landwehr, VOC: A Bibliography of publications relating to the Dutch East India Company 1602-1800
The occupation given to the Maltese was that of bosschieters (these were normal sailors but they were also charged with firing guns, cannons and anything which had to do with gunpowder), sailors, soldiers, quartermasters, hooplopers (providing help to sailors) and boatswains. All of the Maltese who enlisted were either given common or low occupations, unlike other Dutch voyagers who were given military roles. Despite this fact, these Maltese were certainly not slaves since it was illegal to enslave Christians. This does not mean that they suffered no plight at sea or that they were not exploited.\textsuperscript{29} If there happened to be legal slaves, these would certainly be African, Asian and Chinese. The latter two were still not easy to enslave.\textsuperscript{30} When the Maltese were being registered, the clerks did not bother to write their names well.\textsuperscript{31} They wrote their names in a different version and ended up writing them

\textsuperscript{29} Kery Ward, ‘Networks of Empire’ \textit{Networks of Empire and Imperial Sovereignty} (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009)
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Ariese Csilla, \textit{Databases of the people aboard the VOC ships ‘Zeewijk’} (Gothunburg, Australian National Centre of Excellence for Maritime Archeology, 2012)
pretty much to sound Dutch. It could also be the case of doing it intentionally. If it wasn’t for the fact that the country of origin is listed, one would have not noticed that these were actually Maltese. Such examples are Antonio Agius whose name was changed to ‘Antonij Agnes’, Francesco Bartolo to ‘Francisco Barto’, Ambrosio Sammut to ‘Ambrosius Sammiet’, Felice Delia to ‘Felix Phelia’, Farrugia to ‘Farouche’, Pisani to ‘Bisane’, Busuttil to ‘Bustuttil’, Caruana to ‘Carwanen’, Cortis to ‘Cortees’, Portelli to ‘Portell’, Sant to ‘Sanit’, and Spiteri to ‘Souwerie’.

There are no real explanations of how and why these Maltese opted to work in such a dangerous and far away job far from home. What is sure though, is that Hospitaller Malta had strong contacts with the Netherlands, with many Hospitaller commanders being Dutch. In fact the Order of St. John was also present in the Netherlands. It can easily be argued that due to the Knights of St. John these Maltese had travelled to the Netherlands and ultimately signed up to work with the Dutch East India Company. Another probability might also be that they got in contact with some Dutch Merchants in Maltese ports. Seventeenth – Eighteenth Century life in the Netherlands was hard and people suffered poverty and thus a voyage with the Dutch East India Company could have meant a new chance for anyone who would want to enlist. This might have been exciting for the Maltese since it offered a new opportunity. The document also stated that some of the Maltese sailors were experienced sailors, which shows that in some cases the Dutch merchants might have been on the lookout for capable and daring sailors.

32 Ibid.
33 National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers Number access: 04/01/02
34 J.M. Van Winter, Sources concerning the Hospitallers of St John in the Netherlands, 14th – 18th centuries (Leiden/Boston/Keulen, Brill, 1998)
35 M. Galea, Deutsche Ordensritter von Malta (Malta, Publishers Enterprises Group, 2001)
36 Ibid
3:1 - Life in a VOC ship

Life in a ship of a Dutch East India Company venturing into Asia was very hard. Journals, like that written by Hendrick Hamel, who had also enlisted with the Dutch East India Company, and studies of archaeological remains of shipwrecks and murders, shed a light on what went on during a voyage. The life these Maltese and other voyagers encountered seemed to have been really hard. They slept where they worked since there were no sleeping quarters, and while the workload was heavy, life in the ship was also dangerous. Moreover, contracts signed by recruited voyagers tied them down for a period of time and they could not cancel a contract but had to see it through till its full term.

Once aboard the ship, the voyager was prone to danger. There where chances of shipwreck, and moreover he risked falling into the sea and being swept away by strong currents. In fact there are many cases of Maltese who died working on these ships. In this period of one hundred and forty five years, out of the 64 Maltese voyagers employed, 18 died. The exact cause of their death is still unknown. The reasons might vary from shipwrecks and wars since many of the vessels the deceased Maltese had worked on, all had been recorded to be shipwrecked. Apart from the ship being destroyed there was also the constant possibility of starvation.

3:2 - Bravery and struggle at seas

Starvation and dehydration were constant factors which haunted the voyagers in the case of shipwreck or abandoning the ship. Despite the great dangers of a shipwreck there is still one instance in 1753, of a Maltese surviving this terrible

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38 Ariese Csilla, *Databases of the people aboard the VOC ships ‘Introduction and the Voyage’* (Gothunburg, Australian National Centre of Excellence for Maritime Archeology, 2012) pg 5
39 National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, *Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers Number access: 04/01/02*
40 Csilla, pg 9
Michele Angelo, whose ship was called ‘Bredenhof’ had been shipwrecked in the Mozambique Channel, one mile off from the islands of Agoa, and many of the other crew members drowned as a consequence. The ship had left from Zeeland (the Netherlands) in December 1752 under the command of Captain Jan Nielsen, and it was last seen in April of 1753 off the Cape of Good Hope. The ship had intended to go over to Ceylon in order to arrive in Bengal where silver rupees were beaten, carrying 14 kegs of Dutch coins, 29 cases of silver bars and a chest with 5000 gold duktatons. Michele Angelo was one of the remaining few to survive the shipwreck. Angelo had most probably fully recuperated after the shipwreck since he afterwards managed to terminate his contract. As recorded in the case of other shipwreck survivors, he most probably managed to swim to the nearest island and salvage provision from the ship in order to survive.

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41 National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers Number access: 04/01/02, inventory number: 13062, folio 100
42 Ibid.
43 De VOCSite, Bredenhof 1746, 'Details of the Wreck' Retrieved on 29 February 2013 from http://www.vocsite.nl/schepen/detail.html?id=10167
44 Martinus Nijhoff, Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th centuries, Volume III, 'Homeward-bound voyages from Asia and the Cape to the Netherlands (1597-1795).’ RGP-GS167, 1979 - The Hague:, 1979, pg 626
45 Ibid.
46 National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers Number access: 04/01/02, inventory number: 13062, folio 100
47 Csilla, Databases of the people aboard the VOC ships
Not everyone could cope with the hard work which crews were required to do on board. There are in total four cases where a Maltese resigned. One unfortunate voyager was Luca Farrugia who suffered a disability after an accident on a ship and as a result had to terminate his contract. Luca Faruggia would have been repatriated back to the Netherlands due to him becoming ‘incapacitated’ as his status stated. There is also one occasion when a Maltese voyager seemed to have enlisted with the Dutch East India Company in the Netherlands but then was absent upon the ship’s departure. Giovanni Baptist Gargano might have played his cards well by receiving a wage in advance and then not turning up on board upon departure.

48 National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers Number access: 04/01/02, inventory number: 6360, folio: 51
3:3 - The Escape from Dutch Colonies

Apart from the fact that working aboard a ship was hard, one of the methods the Dutch East India Company adopted once it reached land, was that of ‘Divide and Conquer’. This meant that the ship would visit an island and while being stationed there for a few days, it would allow the voyager to roam free until the day the ship left the port. The voyager would automatically have a very hard time once ashore, since he was not provided with any food and water. In fact many died of dehydration waiting for the rain to quench their thirst, but some turned to violent ways to avoid the latter by attacking unarmed people on the island and killing them in order to rob them. This method of ‘Divide and Conquer’ also gave an illegal chance for voyagers to escape. There could have been several ways of escaping but this would be the least difficult. There are five instances in which Maltese voyagers had attempted to run away breaking their contract with the Company. The first recorded attempt of a Maltese escape came from a boy less than 17 years of age. Francesco Dasilvo escaped on 23 July 1739 from Fort St. Jargo, in the Dutch Gold Coast, modern day Ghana. The second time a Maltese tried to escape was on 24 March 1753. Antonio Agius tried to escape in Cape of Good Hope and when he was captured his punishment was to work for several days until he was sent back to the Netherlands without being given a wage. To a certain extent Agius was lucky since punishments for escaping, stealing and getting drunk ranged from hard labour to execution.

Despite the fact that escaping from duty was really difficult, there is one instance when a Maltese had actually managed to leave the place where the ship had docked. The escapee’s name was registered as ‘Frans Boesse’ who had managed

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49 Ibid.
50 National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, *Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers* Number access: 04/01/02
51 National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, *Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers* Number access: 04/01/02, inventory number: 6091, folio: 101
52 National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, “Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers”, Number access: 04/01/02, inventory number: 6291, folio: 50
53 Csilla, Ariese. Databases of the people aboard the VOC ships, “Deaths not caused by the murderers” pg 13, pg 56,
to break loose on 26th February 1760 in Azie (South Africa).\textsuperscript{54} It is not known what actually happened after, but it is certain that his escape was fully successful and that Dutch authorities of the company had no idea where he might have gone.\textsuperscript{55}

There is also one unique case of a Maltese, who was working for the Dutch Company, and at the same time was avoiding the British as he was a run-away. ‘Joseph Alles’, as he is registered, had already been working for a year and a half as a sailor with the Company in 1756.\textsuperscript{56} Unfortunately there is no specified reason why he ultimately escaped, though it is implied that Joseph might have feared that the Dutch authorities might hand him in to the British.\textsuperscript{57}

There were also twenty three cases of Maltese being repatriated back to the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{58} In these cases, most probably they would have been sent back either because they were not fit enough to continue the voyage or else they would have been posted back to the Netherlands to work in the offices of the company. The Dutch East India Company had seventeen shareholders representing different chambers. These chambers were based in the Dutch cities of Amsterdam, Middelburg, Rotterdam, Delft, Hoorn and Enkhuzien where these cities played host to local tradesmen to put forward their interests. There were also four cases where a Maltese had to resign his post as a voyager in order to work with one of these chambers. ‘Joseph Van Malta’ worked with the Chamber of Zeeland in 1729,\textsuperscript{59} “Philipo Salvatore with the Chamber of Enkhuzien in 1754,\textsuperscript{60} Charlo Angelo with the Chamber of Hoorn in 1761,\textsuperscript{61} and Joseph Callus with the Chamber of Enkhzein in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54}National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, \textit{Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers} Number access: 04/01/02, inventory number: 13111, folio: 82
\item \textsuperscript{55}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{56}National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, \textit{Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers} Number access: 04/01/02, inventory number: 14793, folio: 113
\item \textsuperscript{57}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{58}National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, \textit{Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers} Number access: 04/01/02.
\item \textsuperscript{59}National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, \textit{Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers} Number access: 04/01/02, inventory number: 14397, folio: 165
\item \textsuperscript{60}National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, \textit{Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers} Number access: 04/01/02, inventory number: 13068, folio: 341
\item \textsuperscript{61}National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, \textit{Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers} Number access: 04/01/02, inventory number: 13114, folio: 247
\end{itemize}
Due to religious tolerance many workers were attracted to work with these chambers, and moreover these Chambers were in need of good craftsmen.

3:4 - The Busuttil Case: From ‘slave’ to landlord, from landlord to colonist

Despite the fact that in many cases, working with the Company resulted in a deadly or desperate end, there is one particular case of a successful Maltese voyager. Joseph Busuttil has a record of working with the Dutch East India Company for fourteen years, from 29 December 1766 until his release from employment on 8 April 1780. The Cape Colony had a policy that anyone who worked for several years with the company would be ‘rewarded’ and become a “free citizen”. As a result they would be given a piece of land where they could grow and harvest fruit and vegetables and sell them to the vessels in Table Bay in Cape Colony. These men would be called ‘Vryburghers’, and they would have to cultivate crops that they had to sell to the Dutch East India Company itself. Due to the fact that these farms where very hard to manage, Vryburghers imported slaves from Madagascar, Mozambique and Asia. Through this system the Cape Colony (in modern day South Africa) had increased in the number of inhabitants. Amongst the Vryburgher population, one finds the arrival of the Huguenots from France, due to their similar Protestant beliefs to those of the Dutch religion. Out of all the Maltese who had worked with the Company only Joseph Busuttil had managed to become a Vryburgher and considering the fact that from a sailor he had become technically a Colonist was quite an achievement.

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62 National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers Number access: 04/01/02, inventory number: 6448, folio: 291
63 National Archives, the Hague, the Netherlands, Dutch East India Company Sea Voyagers Number access: 04/01/02, inventory number: 13152, folio: 147
64 De VOCsite, Cape of Good Hope available; http://vocsite.nl/geschiedenis/handelsposten/kaap.html
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
Many voyagers lived to tell the tale of their adventures in Asia, Africa or even America. For some it was a matter of months or even years before their suffering would finally end. Through death in war or from suffering we will never really know what actually happened to every Maltese working in the galleys, or fighting in wars. The fact that there are no recorded journals in Malta about the voyages suggests that the majority of the sailors might have not returned. The voyagers who served on Dutch ships experienced suffering, wars and oppression. The Dutch East India Company went bankrupt and defunct in 1798\textsuperscript{68} and with its end the Maltese who fought for it were forgotten.

\textsuperscript{68} M.C. Ricklefs, \textit{A History of Modern Indonesia Since c.1300}, (London, Palgrave MacMillan, 1991)
Joseph Busuttil’s achievement in 1780, when he became a Dutch colonist in Cape Colony, is truly an inspiring story.

Illustration 8 – ‘Traveller’s Tale’ (Fritz Wagner)

A painting depicting a traveller with the VOC speaking about his adventures.
Chapter 4 – The Low Countries in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

4:1 – The case of the Burg family: Maltese Ancestry in North Brabant

Some of the Burg families in Maastricht have Maltese ancestry dating back 200 years.\textsuperscript{69} It all started when Vincent Borg from Birgu, born in 1787, enlisted with the French army in 1809 as a sailor and a soldier.\textsuperscript{70} In 1811, Borg was stationed in ‘s-Hertogenbosch, which is located in the province of North Brabant, Southern Netherlands. Upon being stationed there he met a Dutch woman whom he later married. Borg would eventually settle in the Dutch city of ‘s-Hertogenbosch working as carpenter, and have children.\textsuperscript{71} The surname would eventually be altered from Borg to Burg, a Dutch surname which resembles the Maltese original one. Ironically enough, one of Vincent Borg’s grandsons, would also work as a carpenter and would make the furniture for the Queen of the Netherlands, Wilhelmina, in 1909.\textsuperscript{72} Maltese lineage is still present in some particular Dutch families especially in the North Brabant region, even if the Maltese descendants are not aware of it.

4:2 - The Catholic Connection with a Protestant Land

The Netherlands, one of the most secular countries in Europe, follows the Roman Catholic Religion.\textsuperscript{73} In fact it has only been during these last forty years that Roman Catholics have made up less than 40% of the Dutch population, despite the fact the Protestant population forty years ago was larger than it is now.\textsuperscript{74} The Catholic connection with Malta started on 6 September 1889, when a Jesuit from Cospicua,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{69} J. Burg \textit{Vincent Burg en zijn nakomelingen : 200 jaar geschiedenis van de familie burg} (self published, Maastricht, 1996), p 112
\item \textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Jos Beckler, Joep de Hart \textit{Godsientsige veranderingen in Nederland} (Social en Cultureel Planbureau, 2006) 128.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Radboud University Nijmegen \textit{Katholieken} retrieved on 10 April 2013 from \url{http://www.ru.nl/kaski/onzerzoek/cijfers-rooms/virtuele_map/katholieken/}
\end{itemize}
Reverend Luigi Grech is recorded to have gone to Holland.\textsuperscript{75} Despite the fact that there is no written evidence as to why Grech might have gone to the Netherlands, it can be assumed that he went there to join the Jesuits in Holland. The connection can also be found in Dutch Catholic priests like Gerard van Schijndel, who visited Malta together with the “White Fathers” which was a missionary society founded by Cardinal Charles Lavigerie in 1881.\textsuperscript{76} The White Fathers who came from Belgium, the Netherlands and France, despite not being Jesuits, took up the role of teachers to Africans slaves stationed in Malta’s central Hospital.\textsuperscript{77}

**Illustration 9** – The ‘White Fathers’

Gerard Van Schijndel (far left, middle row) surrounded by the ‘White Father’s’ and African students at Malta’s Central Hospital, at Floriana, 1893.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{75} National Archives of Malta, MFA, *Passport Applications* 489/1889
\textsuperscript{76} Vefie Poels *Vrouwen van het grote missieur* pg 20 no 3
\textsuperscript{77} Denis Starkey W.F. Denis *Brought out of Slavery* ‘The Life – Story of Adrien Atiman: Part One’ available; http://dspace.dial.pipex.com/suttonlink/304ati.html
\textsuperscript{78} Catholic Documentation Centre Nijmegen *Witte Paters* TF1A34641
4:3 - A Presence in Belgium at the beginning of the Twentieth Century

By the beginning of the twentieth century it appears that only five Maltese nationals went directly to Belgium, and did not stop in another European destination before going there. The first Maltese individual to set foot in Belgium in the twentieth century is Guido De Piro Amico, whose age is unknown, and who had left Malta on 31 October 1900.\textsuperscript{79} De Piro Amico went to Belgium to study medicine in Louvain. He eventually graduated as a medical doctor.\textsuperscript{80} The second departure was of Dr Alfredo Bardon from Mellieha aged 52 who left Malta on 1 April 1911. Alfredo Bardon would eventually marry Irene Sciacaluga and have a daughter named Emma.\textsuperscript{81} One case which involves a school student is that of Joseph Alford who resided in Cospicua who departed from Malta on 22 August 1912.\textsuperscript{82,83} What’s interesting about the case of Joseph Alford is that he was only aged twelve and is documented to have had parental consent to depart to Belgium. The fourth case involves a route to Brussels. Lorenzo Chetcuti of Floriana left on 26 of April 1913 but once again we are not given the intention for his stay in Brussels and once again he left no trace whilst there.\textsuperscript{84}

4:4 - Belgium as the gateway to America

One significant finding is that of eighty five Maltese nationals who migrated separately to Antwerp.\textsuperscript{85} This finding was recorded by the Antwerp Immigration Police reporting on foreign nationals residing in the city between 1840 and 1930. Apart from their names and nationality, in some cases, even their resident town is listed. The reason for such a large number of Maltese emigrating to Antwerp was because they had caught the Red Star Line, which transhipped immigrants from

\textsuperscript{79} National Archives of Malta, 31.10.00 \textit{Malta Passport Applications}
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{81} Algemeen Rijksarchief - Archives générales du Royaume file nr. 957.129
\textsuperscript{82} Algemeen Rijksarchief - Archives générales du Royaume file nr. 1.063.485
\textsuperscript{83} National Archives of Malta, 22.8.12 \textit{Malta Passport Applications}
\textsuperscript{84} National Archives of Malta, 26.4.13, \textit{Malta Passport Applications} file nr. 741.
\textsuperscript{85} City Archives of Antwerp Belgium \textit{Antwerp Police Immigration} Index 1840-1930
Europe to North America via Antwerp.\textsuperscript{86} Despite being known as the Red Star Line, the company was officially named \textit{Societe Anonyme de Navigation Belgo-Americaine} and used three vessels; s.s. Vaderland, s.s. Nederland, and the s.s. Switzerland.\textsuperscript{87} Many of the cases the Red Star Line’s final destination was New York, Boston, or Canada.

In several cases, the emigrants had to stay in barracks in Antwerp for a couple of days or even weeks until a vessel arrived, and the conditions in the barracks were far from splendid. Together with other Europeans, Antwerp served as the last port for these travellers till they departed to the New World.\textsuperscript{88} The journey from Antwerp to North America took between a week and fortnight and forming part of this migration were a large numbers of Jewish emigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia, who were fleeing the pogroms and economic insecurity in their countries.\textsuperscript{89}

Below is the list of the eighty five Maltese nationals who made use of the Red Star Line:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Giuseppe Muscat</th>
<th>John Grech</th>
<th>Laurence Bonnici</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Balzan</td>
<td>Giuseppe Grech</td>
<td>Vincenzo Bonnici</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domenico Balzan</td>
<td>Carmelo Grech</td>
<td>Josephine Cathrina Bonnici</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Azzopardi</td>
<td>Fortunato Darmanin</td>
<td>Nicholas Borg</td>
</tr>
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<td>Frans Cordinia</td>
<td>Charles Albert Gatt</td>
<td>Vincent Borg</td>
</tr>
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<td>Joseph Camilleri</td>
<td>Antoon Malten</td>
<td>Salbatore Borg</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Camilleri</td>
<td>Guillaume Gusman</td>
<td>Emmanuele Borg</td>
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<td>Galtano Calleja</td>
<td>Frans Franks</td>
<td>Antonio Grasso</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pasquale Garlato</td>
<td>Osbert Scicluna</td>
<td>Carmelo Barabara</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calleja</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Calleja</td>
<td>Ruggiero Pullicino</td>
<td>William Turnbull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmelo Francesco</td>
<td>Joseph Zarb</td>
<td>Joseph Salvatore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calleja</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bartolo</td>
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\textsuperscript{88} Red Star Line, \textit{Emigration to the US} retrieved on 12 April 2013 from http://www.redstarline.eu/emigrationus.html
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
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<tr>
<th>Final Name</th>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Last Name</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Johan Calleja</td>
<td>Jose Bezzina</td>
<td>Derio Bartolo</td>
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<td>Emmanuel Calleja</td>
<td>Frans Zammit</td>
<td>Emmanuel Bartolo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frans Block</td>
<td>Giovanni Carmelo Zammit</td>
<td>Spiridione Briffa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsie King</td>
<td>Alfonso Casha</td>
<td>Christo Eftimios Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest Nax</td>
<td>Salvatore Cristaldi</td>
<td>Carmelo Mifsud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Herold Stuhr</td>
<td>Antonio Vassallo</td>
<td>John Genovese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfred Doublesin</td>
<td>Giovanni Vassallo</td>
<td>Zoltan Matisz</td>
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<td>George Duca</td>
<td>Adolf Silverstone</td>
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<td>Joseph Farrugia</td>
<td>William Rosario</td>
<td>Michael Cini</td>
</tr>
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<td>Giovanni Caruana</td>
<td>Carlo Sant</td>
<td>Antonio Pace</td>
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<td>Domenico Anetto Caruana</td>
<td>Giuseppe Schembri</td>
<td>Carmelo Sultana</td>
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<td>George Saliba</td>
<td>Angelo Schembri</td>
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<td>Paul Sammut</td>
<td>Maria Bianca Schembri</td>
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<td>Albert Sammut</td>
<td>Salvatore Busuttil</td>
<td>Paolo Ellul</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victor John George West</td>
<td>Anthonoy Zarb</td>
<td>Emmanuel Vella</td>
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<td>Lorenzo Cassar</td>
<td>Ramiro Barbara</td>
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<td>Pascal Gauci</td>
<td>Marie Vella</td>
<td>Jozef Buttigieg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vincent Spiteri</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

**Illustration 10** – Red Star Line postcards

These served as an advertisement for anyone who wanted to depart for Ellis Island, New York.

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90 Digital Poster Collection, Redstarline
Illustration 11 – Immigrants getting on board one of the Red Star Line

Immigrants would wait at a barracks in Antwerp until a ship would arrive, and get board on it for their final destination to North America

4:5 - The Muscat Brothers in ‘The Trading City’

The sea passage of 5 November 1915 by the Muscat brothers is a conspicuous case due to the unusual voyage these unknown sailors took. Instead of taking the popular Maltese route to the port of Marseilles, they seemed to be more ambitious and cruised to Rotterdam instead, at a time when a great war was being fought on the European continent. Carmelo Muscat, aged 38\(^{91}\) and Francesco Muscat aged 22\(^{92}\) had registered their own ship called Rumanian, which provided them with a free passage to all Dutch ports. The mysterious navigators were allowed to embark and disembark in Holland whenever they wanted to unless they hindered any international maritime laws.

\(^{91}\) National Archives of Malta, MFA, 873/1914
\(^{92}\) National Archives of Malta, MFA, 874/1914
It is not known whether the Muscat brothers had taken some other crewmembers on board, but if so, they would certainly have not been Maltese due to the fact that they were the only ones registered on the ship. Despite having no clear intention of sailing to Rotterdam one can only guess the ultimate purpose for this journey. Till this very day, Rotterdam is the largest port in Europe, and from the 1960’s up till 2002 Rotterdam was the world’s busiest port.\(^{93}\) This old and trading city, proved crucial in the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War of 1780, and in the Belgian Revolution of 1830 where a number of Belgian shipping companies stationed their ships in Rotterdam.\(^{94}\) Merchants and traders, especially from neighbouring central European and Nordic countries were attracted by Rotterdam's tolerance and economic opportunities, especially with the emergence of steam powered ships.\(^{95}\) What’s strange about the Maltese sailors with regards to Rotterdam is that despite the Netherlands being a neutral port it would be a very dangerous task to sail across the North Sea from the Mediterranean. What the Muscat brothers seemed to have done is to defy logic which provokes a lot of thoughts. The Muscat brothers might have been traders or merchants, but there might have also been a sinister truth to the picture which unfortunately remains a mystery.

\section*{4:6 – Fallen Heroes of World War I}

Unlike today’s peaceful connotations associated with, the Benelux, it has gone through a lot of wartime exposure. This was mostly felt in the mid twentieth century when World War I broke out. Allied and Central soldiers fought in the Belgian territory. Together with the British and other Commonwealth forces, Maltese troops also gave their contribution. The Belgian territory was very decisive since it led to several other crucial passageways and borders. By 12 September 1914 with help from the British army, the French halted the German advance towards Paris and


thus both sides were fighting in mostly Belgian territories. The battles which commenced resulted in terrible injuries and a high number of casualties. Unfortunately one can’t know the names of all the Maltese troops who fought in World War I, and the only names retrieved are the ones who were killed during the war.

On 21 December 1914, a Maltese serviceman, Second Lieutenant Frederick Paul Bernard was killed in action becoming the first Maltese to die in Belgium during World War I. Bernard served with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, and despite having no grave, is remembered on the Ploegstreert Memorial. The Battle of Ypres Salient was one of the biggest battles in World War I. It involved a coalition of British, French, Belgian and Commonwealth forces against the German invasion. It was in this battle that amongst the list of dead soldiers we find Private A. Attard, Private Andrew Camilleri, Publio Farrugia, Private Robert Felix Grech, Captain Richard Victor Joseph Roy Agius and Private E. Sapienza, who are all Maltese.

Private A. Attard Served with the Canadian Expeditionary Forces ‘Alberta Regiment’. He died on 7 April 1916. Despite Attard having no grave he is still remembered on the Menin Gate Memorial in Belgium, which is dedicated to British and Commonwealth forces. Serving with the Australian Regiment, Private Andrew Camilleri died on 12 October 1917 and is buried in Tyne Cot Cemetery. Private Publio Farrugia serving with the West Yorkshire Regiment died on the 25 April 1918, aged 19 years. Private Robert Felix Grech was part of the Quebec Regiment, Canadian Infantry. He died on 4 June 1916, aged 26 years. He was also the son of Professor Salvatore Grech and Jane Grech, nee Shillinglaw. Richard Victor Joseph Roy Agius, aged only 21 served as Captain with the London Regiment, and died on

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100 Ibid, retrieved on 13 December 2012 from http://website.lineone.net/~stevebidmead/soldiers.htm
the 26 October 1917.\textsuperscript{101} Private E. Sapienza who resided at 22 Strada San Trofimo, Sliema, served with the Canadian Infantry, Western Ontario Regiment and died on 26 April 1916, aged 31 years.\textsuperscript{102} All these Maltese soldiers lost their lives in the Battle of the Ypres Salient and are remembered at the Tyne Cot Memorial Cemetery in Belgium\textsuperscript{103} except for Sapienza who is remembered in Voormezeele Cemetery.

Despite the fact that nearly all the Maltese who served in WWI are remembered in Tyne Cot Memorial, Lieutenant Colonel George Monreal is remembered in Locre Hospice Cemetery. Monreal served as infantry with the British Wiltshire Regiment. He died on 11 April 1918 in Locre, (today called Loker) in the province of West Flanders, which served back then as a medical unit treatment due to nearby battles.\textsuperscript{104} On Thursday 8 December 2011, the Maltese Embassy in Belgium held a ceremony to commemorate the Maltese servicemen who fell during the two World Wars.\textsuperscript{105} The ceremony was held in Ploegsteert at the memorial of Second Lieutenant Frederick Paul, in the place where the unofficial truce between the soldiers took place.\textsuperscript{106}

Belgium also served as an asylum for anyone who wanted to avoid World War I. There might be many cases of Maltese who could have migrated to Belgium to avoid the war, though there are no records of such events due to the fact that during the wars no documentation was kept, and if documents were kept they have been lost. For example one known case is that of Giuseppe Galea from St Julians, who happened to be working in France. Once World War I started Galea took refuge in Belgium due to the country’s neutrality.\textsuperscript{107} When even Belgium had succumbed to the German invasion, Galea was lucky enough to be hid in an apartment by a local Belgian woman. After the war ended, Galea married the woman who saved him.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104} Locre Hospice Cemetery Historical Information retrieved 13 December 2012 from http://www.webmatters.net/cwgc/loker_hospice.htm
\textsuperscript{105} Times of Malta 8 December 2011. ‘Maltese fallen on the Western Front commemorated’
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} [Dalli, Luigi], Personal Interview [15 November 2012].
and revisited Belgium frequently. On another instance a young marine from Marsa, Paolo Barthazano Galea, is recorded to have stayed in Belgium during the war, until he came back to Malta around May 1925.

Illustration 12 – Christmas card dedicated to the Commonwealth forces of the 7th Division

The 7th Division fought in Battles across France and Belgium.

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108 Ibid.
Chapter 5 - An Attempted workers migration plan

By the 1960s the ‘Maltese Diaspora’ were en route to Australia, Canada and the United States. Despite this fact, the Maltese Government was fully aware that the European Continent would also be in need of workers since Europe was sending many of its workers to Australia or North America and leaving the continent in need of manual labourers.\(^{111}\) In fact it became fully aware that the teaching of the fourth European language like French would eventually become much more important in 20 to 30 years from then than teaching science subjects.\(^{112}\) From the 1950s onwards change started to take place in the Belgian Economy. It was at this stage that European governments declared their need for immigrants to fill the void of employment available. Later on, when immigrants from Belgium’s own colony, mainly from Congo, were not enough, Belgium started calling for Southern European immigrants. By the 1960s Italian immigrants were leaving for Belgium while Portuguese workers settled in Luxembourg. Maltese workers would soon follow and it was here that the Maltese Government exploited the situation well, knowing that a European country in need of manual workers was the ideal place for the Maltese to emigrate to, especially since the distance between Malta and Belgium was insignificant compared to that which exists between Malta and Australia. The latter is a country hundreds of Maltese workers emigrated to in the beginning of the twentieth century\(^{113}\) and in the 1960s, Maltese workers were still going there in large numbers.\(^{114}\)

5:1 - First Developments of Working Schemes in Central Europe

In the 1960s Malta and Switzerland introduced a worker’s scheme, as the latter country was well organised and also a very beautiful place to train, learn and work in. Messers Feldmuhle Ltd. of Rorsarch, Switzerland which manufactured rayon, nylon and other materials offered a 12 month contract of a 45 hour working week to

\(^{111}\) The Times of Malta, 15 November 1963. ‘Skilled and Unskilled Workers’
\(^{112}\) Ibid.
\(^{113}\) Lawrence E. Attard, Early Maltese Emigration 1800 – 1914 (Valletta, Gulf, 1983)
\(^{114}\) Lawrence E. Attard, L-Emigrazzjoni Maltija: is-seklu Dsatax u Ghoxrin, Malta (Malta, PIN, 1999)
Maltese workers and offered to pay for all flights.\textsuperscript{115} Enquiries in Switzerland revealed that working there could be difficult, however, worker migration was not to be ruled out.\textsuperscript{116} The first group to go there were twenty one youths who were members of the Young Christian Workers and employees of also Messrs Pheonix Textiles Ltd of Mosta which sent them to train them. Six other youths, also members of the Young Christian Workers’ Movement followed them weeks later. They first left for Rome in order to catch the train for Mels. They would be employed as spinners by the Messrs Stoffe Ltd. Days later a third group consisting of eight young men followed to work for the same company in Mels.\textsuperscript{117} Despite the difficulty of working in a non Anglo Saxon country, the Maltese coped well with working in a Continental European country.\textsuperscript{118} Four months after the scheme had started, a total of forty two Maltese in Switzerland were working as plumbers, mechanics and labourers all aged between eighteen and thirty two.\textsuperscript{119} At the onset, the scheme to Switzerland seemed exemplary and successful, and led to the idea of introducing the scheme to other countries. As a result both Belgium and Germany showed an interest\textsuperscript{120}.

After Switzerland, the workers’ scheme was introduced to Germany. During the late 50s and 60s Germany was in need of Christian immigrants, due to the fact that previously, Turkish immigrants had gone to work in Germany but clashed with the locals for cultural and religious reasons. When the Maltese Ministry of Emigration offered to send its workers, the German Government was more than willing to accept such an offer.\textsuperscript{121} By March 1963 the car manufacture company Ford stated that it was interested in hiring Maltese workers with the necessary qualifications. It did not contact any agency or commission, and instead all interested workers could register with the Employment Office, in Valletta, which was then in 106 Britannia Street.\textsuperscript{122} The categories of workers required consisted of sheet metal workers,
electricians, tool makers, universal milling machine operators, and model makers.\textsuperscript{123} Some of the Maltese who would work with the company lived there till the end of their contract, which others decided to settle there after their contract ended.\textsuperscript{124} The workers’ scheme in Germany was highly successful and proved more fruitful than the previous one in Switzerland. The Maltese Government was now keen to repeat the procedure with the remaining country offering a workers’ scheme: Belgium.

\textbf{5:2 - Talks open on Emigration to Belgium}

The Belgian Government also saw a potential in Maltese workers. Due to the Roman Catholic connection, there was a lot of expectation that this scheme would have the most positive outcome. The Belgian Works Ministry had up to 6,000 vacant jobs and was strongly in need of capable workers. Positions included; stone masons, carpenters, concrete workers, and builders. Discussions were being held in Brussels between the Maltese and the Belgian Government with regards to this sector.\textsuperscript{125} The mines of Louvain were an encouraging prospect for migrants to work in, since they offered state of the art conditions and also good wages, but the Maltese workers had declined any offer to work in mines.\textsuperscript{126} Moreover, Belgium was also in need of female migrants, to be employed in the wool making industry. This offer was not taken up however. On the other hand, the Belgian government tried to exploit the situation by encouraging Maltese tourists to visit. When Maltese officials visited Belgium before Maltese workers started to emigrate there, they were taken on tour to Tongeren, to be shown how much Belgium had developed it tourism industry.\textsuperscript{127}

On 29 October 1963 the Director of the Belgian Buildings and Public Works National Federation; Mr Richard Asselmen, together with Mr. Grand-Ry, a Belgian official, arrived in Malta in order to discuss the possibility of sending Maltese workers to

\begin{footnotesize}
123 \textit{Ibid.} \\
124 [Cachia Zammit, Alexander] \textit{Personal Interview}. [12 January 2013]. \\
125 \textit{Ibid.} \\
126 \textit{Ibid.} \\
127 \textit{Ibid.}
\end{footnotesize}
Belgium with the Maltese Government. This meant that the Maltese emigrant workers would be employed by the Belgian Ministry of Works. Apart from the local government both Mr. Asselmen and Mr Grand - Ry had discussions with Mr. J. Rossignaud who was Director of Emigration, Rev Phillip Calleja who was Director of the Catholic Action Emigrants' Commission, and Mr Ronald Smith who was the Consul for Belgium. The International Catholics Migrants Commission represented by Rev Calleja in Malta, gave much importance to the conditions of work, in order for this scheme to succeed.

Illustration 13 – Arrival of the Belgian officials in Malta

Fr. Philip Calleja, Mr. J Rossignaud, and Mr. S. Gatt at Luqa Airport, meeting with Mr. Grand-Ry and Mr. Asselmen upon the arrival of the Belgian officials in Malta.

The job each worker had to take up had been assigned prior to their departure while arrangements and discussions about the selection of the workers were made up till

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128 The Times of Malta, 30 October 1963. ‘Openings in Belgium’

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one month before the workers left.\textsuperscript{129} There was a recruitment process with the workers being interviewed before selection. During negotiations, there were first some hiccups though. The Belgian Government did not want to pay the family allowance of the migrant workers, since Belgian law stated that no family welfare was offered for the migrant’s relatives. Thanks to Mr Assermen’s intervention, an exception to the law was made, and so family allowance was granted. It was finally agreed that three months after the workers’ arrival, their families would be allowed to join them.\textsuperscript{130}

5:3 - Belgium opens its gates to Maltese Workers

In April 1964, the first group consisting of 54 Maltese migrant workers left Luqa Airport for Belgium on a chartered flight with Sabena Airlines.\textsuperscript{131} A chartered flight needed to be organised since negotiations on the official flight programme for this airline had not been concluded. Rev Philip Calleja also took the flight and spent a fortnight in Belgium order to look after the Maltese emigrant’s needs.\textsuperscript{132} The job the workers took up were those of white-washers, labourers, drivers, plasterers, stone-dressers, stone masons, and store keepers. The city where the workers were stationed was Liege and offered the same conditions and wages Belgian workers had.\textsuperscript{133} Within the group leaving for Belgium there was George Farrugia, who was well known as a comedian, especially in imitating Charlie Chaplin.\textsuperscript{134} He had been working for Simmonds Farsons Cisk for thirteen years and his aim in going to Belgium was to seek a fortune in the Belgian entertaining business. He would later come back to Malta since the Belgians had still not heard of Charlie Chaplin and therefore he was not successful. Despite his entertainment talents not being appreciated there, on his return to Malta, a Belgian film producer offered him a

\textsuperscript{129} The Times of Malta, 1 March 1964. ‘Workers for Belgium’
\textsuperscript{130} The Times of Malta, April 13 1964. ‘Special Bonus for Workers Leaving Belgium’
\textsuperscript{131} The Times of Malta, April 21 1964, ‘Workers Leave For Belgium’
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid
leading role in a film which he refused due to the fact that if he had accepted the role, he would have had to return to Belgium.

Illustration 14 – First group of the Maltese migrant workers

The first group left for Belgium on 21 April 1964

5:4 - The Failed Emigration to Belgium

At the onset, the emigration scheme seemed to be working though two apparent problems emerged. The first one was related to language. Almost every one of the Maltese emigrant workers had no knowledge of French, let alone Flemish. The second problem was the weather conditions the workers faced. Despite being given protective gear, some of the workers were still not used to working in rainy conditions. Unfortunately many did not want to continue working in these conditions and preferred the Mediterranean climate instead. Thus, after a few months many started heading back by catching the train and heading southwards until they

135 [Darmanin, Joseph] Personal Interview. [12 January 2013].
reached Malta. Moreover, another reason for the migration failing can be attributed to the fact that the migration was purely a Government initiative.\textsuperscript{136} If one compares the Belgian scheme to that of the successful migration scheme in Germany one would notice that the determining factor would be that the scheme in Germany was backed by private investment while in Belgium it was Government backed. In Germany the Maltese migrants received every type of social benefit such as education, housing, and permission to bring their family. None of this happened easily in Belgium. The Ford Company in Germany had its scheme very well organised and the management was very interested in its workers. In fact the Ford Company had even taught the Maltese workers German, while in the case of Belgium the migrants were left alone to fend for themselves.\textsuperscript{137}

After two years some of the men in Belgium were depressed due to the fact that their families were not with them. Despite the failure of the Belgian worker’s scheme, some emigrants were resilient enough to make it, but they were still a small percentage of the workers who had gone there.\textsuperscript{138} Overall, the emigration to Belgium did happen, though it just did not fully materialise.

\textsuperscript{136} [Cachia Zammit, Dr. Alexander] \textit{Personal Interview}. [12 January 2013].
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} [Darmanin, Joseph] \textit{Personal Interview}. [12 January 2013].
Chapter 6 - Changing Malta – Benelux Communications

6:1 - An Electric Submarine Telegraph Line

On 25 February 1853 Malta became telegraphically linked to the Benelux. It was Governor William Reid, Governor of Malta, who had informed the Maltese public of the new benefit that an electric submarine telegraph company would give as mail could be distributed between Malta to London with Belgium and the Netherlands being available midway. In fact the route for the telegraph via Malta went through Genoa, Geneva, Basle, the Rhine, Belgium and Ostend until it reached its final destination in London.\(^\text{139}\)

6:2 - An Air Services agreement

An agreement between the Government of Malta and the Government of Belgium had been finally presented to the Maltese House of Representatives by the Minister of Commonwealth and Foreign Affairs by March 1971.\(^\text{140}\) The scope of the agreement was to establish an air services agreement between the two respective territories.\(^\text{141}\) Both governments were subject to follow the agreement according to the Convention on International Civil Aviation of 1944\(^\text{142}\) established in order to coordinate international air travel. This enabled any airline to be authorised to travel and have routes to both territories. This agreement can be considered highly important for Maltese – Belgian communications, since it enabled the air companies of both negotiating parties to use each other’s air space while having the right to

\(^{139}\) National Archives of Malta, Gov 2.1.49, 25 February 1853
\(^{140}\) University of Malta Melitensia Treaty Series No 122 ‘Agreement between the Government of Malta and the Government of Belgium for Air Services between and beyond their respective territories’ March 1971.
\(^{141}\) Ibid.
\(^{142}\) Ibid.
pick up and drop off passengers, cargo and mail.\textsuperscript{143} Moreover, both governments had the right to invite any third party to use this route, even though they had the right to refuse granting operating authorisations to a company. Therefore, when an airline was authorised, it could start operating the agreed services while abiding with the agreement.

Both governments still had the right to revoke the agreement, such as in cases where they would not be satisfied with the airline operating, in cases where the airline did not comply with regulations, or in case where the airlines failed to operate within the conditions of the agreement. Anything like food, beverages, oil, or tobacco which the aircraft had carried from Belgium to Malta or vice versa, was exempt of customs duties, inspection fees or any other fees if they remained on the aircraft. This included the spare parts taken on board to the destination for maintenance purposes, and fuel or lubricants which where needed to supply the aircraft. If anything was to be taken off the aircraft it would then be subject to the customs duties in force.\textsuperscript{144}

This agreement ensured that there would be fair and equal opportunities for both Maltese and Belgian airlines while there would be specific routes to the territories of both countries. Moreover it also ensured that both governments respected the airline of the respective country in order not to affect its quality. This agreement permitted not only the carriage on board of passengers but also that of any cargo or mail which anyone could have sent from Malta to Belgium or vice versa.\textsuperscript{145} Both parties also agreed on the tariffs to be established which would remain in force until a decision was taken to establish new ones. Meanwhile, the aeronautical authorities of both contracting parties were required to show all reciprocal data and information which showed the amount of traffic, services and destinations carried out by the airlines.

\textsuperscript{143} University of Malta Melitensia Treaty Series No 122 ‘Agreement between the Government of Malta and the Government of Belgium for Air Services between and beyond their respective territories’ March 1971.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
With a spirit of close cooperation both authorities of the contracting parties were obliged to consult each other with the scope of avoiding any form of disputes. In the case of a dispute both negotiating parties would agree on a third party to settle the dispute. In the case that a third party was not agreed upon, three arbitrators would assist the diplomatic settlement with both sides nominating an arbitrator each while the third would be appointed by the two so nominated.\textsuperscript{146} If the contracting parties failed to nominate the arbitrator within sixty days, the President of the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organisation at the request of each party would have had the power to nominate an arbitrator.\textsuperscript{147}

6:3 - Negotiations with Sabena Airlines

The common problem Maltese travellers had when visiting the Benelux countries was that there were no direct flights available. Previous Maltese Governments were fully aware that this problem would restrain several developments related to the Benelux, and thus for geographical and political reasons Maltese people could not set foot in the Benelux as much as they could do in North Africa, Italy, France and the UK. As a result in July 1963 the Maltese Government started negotiations with Sabena Airlines in order to have operations of air services between Malta and Belgium.\textsuperscript{148} By October 1963 Sabena Officials arrived in Malta. Baron Regnier de Wykerslooth de Royesteyn and Baron Alfred d’Assche of Belgium had discussions with Maltese Prime Minister George Borg Olivier.\textsuperscript{149} Also present were the Maltese Minister of Industrial Development and Tourism Dr G. Felice and the Chairmain of the Malta Government Tourist Board, Mr J. Pollacco. By 1974 the Sabena Belgian World Airlines started to operate regularly and gave the opportunity to Maltese individuals to take direct flights to Belgium. It was also on 1 April 1974 that Air Malta started to operate to Continental Europe.\textsuperscript{150} A market study was conducted by both

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{148} 'Scheduled air services Belgium – Malta Sabena Belgian World Airlines', TOU 13/80/2: Malta Government Airlines Tourist Board National Archives of Malta,
\textsuperscript{149} The Times of Malta, 16 October 1963
\textsuperscript{150} Retrieved on 10 December 2012 from http://www.airmalta.com/history?l=1
Malta and Belgium in order to promote tourism. Despite the fact that the airline could have been utilised for emigration, it was mainly used for tourism.

Today, many airlines offer flights to the Benelux countries from Malta, with some of them charging low fares. Air Malta still provides regular flights to destinations in the Benelux countries while low cost airlines like Ryanair and Easyjet are also popular amongst Maltese travellers. As a result, the absence of Sabena Airlines, which went bankrupt in 2001,\(^{151}\) has not been felt.

**6:4 - Diplomatic Relations**

With regards to diplomatic relations Malta has one embassy strategically placed in the central part of Brussels with Vanessa Frazier as Ambassador having taken over from the predecessor Pierre Clive Agius in 2012.\(^{152}\) The embassy’s commercial policy is to promote Maltese goods\(^ {153}\) and it is also responsible to assist Maltese expatriates in case of problems. The importance of the embassy in Brussels increased after Malta’s accession to the EU and the location of the embassy has been moved from Chausee de Charleroi 92, 1060 Brussels, to 25 Rue Archimede, Brussels 1000.\(^{154}\) With regards to Malta’s diplomatic relations with the Netherlands, there is the embassy situated in Carnegielaan 4-14, 2517, The Hague with Martin Valentino serving as Ambassador.\(^ {155}\) The main role of the Maltese Embassy in Belgium is to promote bilateral relations with Belgium, Luxembourg and NATO.\(^ {156}\) While being responsible for relations between Malta and the Netherlands, the ambassador here is also a non-resident ambassador to Sweden, Finland, and Norway.\(^ {157}\)

\(^{153}\) Malta Development Corporation 1971 ‘The Exporter’s Handbook: Belgium’
\(^{154}\) Ibid
\(^{156}\) Zorna Brusse’l Malta u lil Hinn Minnha, retrieved on 15 November 2012 from http://vimeo.com/51424691
\(^{157}\) [Valentino, Martin] Interview on Telephone The Hague – Malta, [22 November 2012].
Chapter 7 - Business Practice and Job Opportunities

7:1 - Benelux as a Business Centre

Being strategically placed in Europe, close to key markets like that of France, Germany and the UK, the Benelux countries play host to several international political and economic organizations. These include the European Union with its own institutions, NATO, the World Customs Organisation, the Benelux General Secretariat, Eurocontrol, the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court, Europol, Eurojust, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. These institutions all serve as a potential for job employment to EU member state nationals, including Maltese. Moreover, a number of Maltese workers are also employed in the Benelux by independent firms and Malta also earns an income from the export of goods to the Benelux.

7:2 - Market reality in the Benelux

Despite the fact that many Maltese nationals work in the Benelux countries, the ones working within the several institutions can be mainly considered as short term economic migrants. There are a few Maltese who are working as self-employed or working in the Belgian private sector. Malta’s entry into the European Union, unfortunately has not created new job opportunities within private companies in the Benelux. One should note that the Benelux region is composed of three different countries and thus despite their similarities, the reasons and motivation for Maltese nationals moving to the Netherlands would differ from those who move to either

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159 Retrieved on 10 March 2013 from http://www.government.nl/issues/international-organisations/dutch-representation-at-international-organisations
160 Simon Dalli / Mr. Omar Cutajar, Malta Business Bureau, 26 October 2012, The Brussels Office
161 Ibid.
Belgium or Luxembourg. In business terms, one has to argue that Maltese immigration to the Benelux countries can’t be considered as migration in the traditional way as the likes of migration to Australia and Canada as the people who went there were economic migrants. The emigration of Maltese nationals since the 60s to Australia, Canada, the US, and the UK was fit to be called a Diaspora unlike the case of the Benelux.

The current reality of Maltese businesses in the Benelux is that it is difficult for Maltese firms to penetrate.\textsuperscript{162} It is quite common to have individuals seeking job opportunities with business firms in the Benelux, especially in Brussels who at the receiving end are preoccupied with professional certifications. Therefore, at times, some jobs require qualifications from universities in central Europe which cater for office work. Moreover, the French language would come very much in use, and as we shall see in the next chapter, most Maltese nationals who are seeking to work in these fields are not fluent in the language. Another main problem a Maltese national faces while seeking to open a business in the Benelux countries is the high level of corporate taxation.\textsuperscript{163}

\textbf{7:3 - Benelux for Market exploitation}

The only Maltese business in the Benelux is a family restaurant in Ghent.\textsuperscript{164} The restaurant was opened on March 2011 by Anna Bardon and her husband who is Belgian.\textsuperscript{165} Despite the restaurant being quite well known amongst the Maltese, it does not specialise for Maltese customers due to the fact that it based in a municipality not inhabited by many Maltese. Despite the fact that Maltese businesses will find it difficult to penetrate in Dutch and Belgian markets, several Maltese consumption goods are still exported to the Benelux countries. In recent years we have seen several cases where agents in the Benelux imported Maltese agricultural products. The first occasion was that of Maltese wine being imported by

\begin{flushright}
\begin{tabular}{l}
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{165} Simon Dalli / Mrs. Anna Bardon, Villa Bardon.
\end{tabular}
\end{flushright}
the Belgian supermarket chain Delhaize Group.\textsuperscript{166} In fact on March 2010, a leading Maltese winemaker Emanuel Delicata, exported its products to Belgium leaving the Belgian agents impressed with the quality of Maltese wine produced.\textsuperscript{167} Maltese grown potatoes are also being imported in the Netherlands\textsuperscript{168} by the Dutch renowned Company, Jansen Dongen BV, based in Tilburg, which supplies top supermarkets in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{169}

Maltese Embassies in the Benelux countries can play a vital role in promoting Maltese products. In fact both embassies in Brussels and The Hague have kept in mind that economic ties might not only enhance relations between the two states, but also contribute to the growth of the Maltese community. On June 2011 the Maltese Ambassador to the Netherlands, Martin Valentino, held a meeting with Mr. Jochum Haakma who is the Chairman of the Board of the Netherlands Council for Trade Promotion.\textsuperscript{170} In this meeting, the importance of bilateral business activities between Malta and the Netherlands was stressed. Mr Valentino, also referred to his participation and the presentation he made during the ‘Doing Business with the Netherlands’ meeting, held in Malta in April 2010. The Maltese Embassy pushed for business services between the two countries in financial services, pharmaceuticals, food and beverages, I.C.T and incentives travel. Moreover, Mr Haakma made reference to two events: the Malta Business Forum to the Netherlands which was held in Amsterdam in March 2011, and the Netherlands British Chamber of Commerce, where both Maltese and Dutch Companies where encouraged to open new businesses and trade ventures.\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{166} Retrieved on 7 January 2013 from http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20110609/local/delhaize-shows-interest-in-maltese-wine.369803
\textsuperscript{167} Retrieved on 7 January 2013 from http://www.delicata.com/belgium1.aspx
\textsuperscript{168} The Times of Malta, 13 May 2013. ‘Potato farmer in online video unperturbed by criticism’
Illustration 15 – Maltese wine served in Ramsel

Maltese wine being served during a wine tasting festival in Ramsel, 2010.

Illustration 16 – Maltese ambassador meets with the owners of ‘Jansen Dongen’

Dutch company ‘Jansen Dongen’ imports Maltese potatoes to Timburg.
The Embassy of Malta in Belgium is also committed to establishing bilateral talks for political and economic ties between the two countries. The Maltese Embassy in Belgium has also made contact with the Government of Luxembourg about Malta’s ratification of the Double Taxation Protocol which will also include Luxembourg, aimed at generating employment. The increase in the Maltese community in the Benelux also led to a BOV branch opening in Brussels on June 2012.172 The objective behind it was for the local business communities to take advantage of EU funding.173

7:4 - Cultural activities

Culture can serve as a tool whereby nationalities meet and also as a way of generating employment. In fact during these past years there have been several efforts to share Maltese culture and a handful of activities.174 Apart from art exhibitions, feasts like Independence Day,175 the feast of St Paul176177178 and Victory feast179 were celebrated in order to promote Maltese culture in the Benelux. Awareness of the Maltese language and literature has also been initiated. In fact, books written in Maltese have started to be used across Belgian and Luxembourgian schools with the purpose of promoting multilingualism.180 In terms of art, there have been many exhibitions of paintings and photography.181182 There have also been attempts at trying to expose Maltese culture to the Belgian locals through language and gastronomy and an attempt to find similarities in Roman
Catholic traditions which Malta and Belgium share.\textsuperscript{183} There also happens to be a Maltese pianist, Gabi Sultana, who studied in the Netherlands and Belgium who while residing in Belgium gives concerts in Belgium and the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{184} Gabi Sultana, despite not being well known in Malta seems to be quite active and is strictly considered to have studied and worked in the Benelux.\textsuperscript{185} On a lighter note, the famous Belgian landmark in Brussels, the “Manneken Pis” was also dressed as a Knight of St. John on 19 June 2010 in order to highlight the Maltese presence in the region.\textsuperscript{186}

\textbf{Illustration 17} – Manneken Pis dressed as Knight of St. John

\textbf{Illustration 18} – Feast of St. Paul celebrated in Brussels

The invitation was held at Pierre Clive Agius’ residence on 9 February 2011

\textsuperscript{184} Retrieved from 8 March 2013 http://www.gabisultana.com/#lbio/c22j5
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{186} Retrieved from 8 March 2013 http://www.foreign.gov.mt/Library/PDF/Menikin%20piss%20maltese.pdf
In the Netherlands an art exhibition organised by the Embassy called “Maltese meets the Netherlands – Art from the Heart” consisted of forty local drawings and designs. On another occasion, a concert named “Life I Live” aimed at celebrating European cultural diversity was held at the Lange Voorhout Square in the City of The Hague, at which several famous European musicians performed in different genres. The one representing Malta was a renowned multi-talented precisionist and musician producer Renzo Spiteri, accompanied by his students from the Royal Conservatory of the Hague. Meanwhile on the European Day of Languages, students from Vrijzinnig Christelijk College in the Hague learned some Maltese together with Italian, German, French, Danish, Greek, and other European languages.

Illustration 19 – Exhibition at the Maltese Embassy in the Hague

The exhibition ‘Maltese meets the Netherlands – Art from the Heart’, was held on 20 April 2012.

7.5 - Sports

The Summer Olympics hosted by the city of Amsterdam in 1928 gave Malta a chance to compete in the Olympics for the first time. This was done at the request of the International Olympic Committee who had also invited Rhodesia and Newfoundland for the first time.\(^{190}\) The only sport the Maltese competed in was water polo with veteran Turu Rizzo forming part of the nine man squad.\(^{191}\) In the first round, Malta managed to win against Luxembourg 3-1 with Harry Bonavia, Edward Magri, and Robert Vella scoring a goal each. Unfortunately Malta lost to defending Olympic Champions France by a disappointing score of 16-0 in the Quarterfinals.\(^{192}\) Malta was not the only team to lose by a big margin, since Argentina had lost 14-0 to Hungary, while Great Britain had lost 8-1 to the same France in the third place playoff. Germany went to win Gold, while Hungary finished runners up.\(^{193}\)

Illustration 20 – Maltese Water Polo team, 1928.

The Malta squad consisted of Harry Bonavia, Meme Busietta, Victor Busietta, Louis Darmanin, Edward Magri, Francisco Nappa (GK), Victor Pace, Turu Rizzo, Roger Vella.\(^{194}\)

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\(^{190}\) *The Ninth Olympiad Amsterdam 1928* available; http://www.la84foundation.org/6oic/OfficialReports/1928/1928p1.pdf


\(^{193}\) Ibid.

\(^{194}\) 006003435 (foto), *Spaarnestad Photo*, Fotograf Onbekend, Netherlands
The first occasion when a Maltese football team met a team from the Benelux was when Floriana FC played against the Dutch side of N.A.C Breda in the first round of the Uefa Cup Winners Cup in 1967. The first leg was played on home turf, on 21 September, with the score ending 2-1 in favour the Dutch side. In the second leg, played in Eindhoven, the Maltese side was eliminated due to another 1-0 loss. The final result was not so bad for Floriana, considering the fact that N.A.C Breda was a strong European team that a year later, went on to win the trophy.

Illustration 21 – NAC Breda vs Floriana FC (Ge van der Werff)

NAC Breda forward Ferry Pirard sees his attack blocked by Floriana goalkeeper Charles Zerafa, during the game played in Eindhoven on 12 October 1967.

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196 Ibid.
197 Ge van der Werff, ANP Historisch Archief Community [13862558]
The Maltese National Football team met the Netherlands six times. All of the matches played were qualifiers for the Euro Championship, and all of them resulted in a Dutch victory. None of the games made headlines like the European Championship qualifiers. On 17 December 1983, the Dutch defeated the Maltese 5-0, finishing top of the group with 13 points. The last qualifying match was against Spain, with the latter needing to win the match with more than 11 goals to win the group. The final score was 13-1 in favour of Spain, which not only resulted in Spain winning the group, but also in the Netherlands not qualifying for the tournament. The score at the end of the first half was only 2-1 which raised a lot of speculation. The Dutch media were so angry with the defeat that up till the year 2000, Dutch T.V stations showed an advertisement, depicting the Maltese national side being excited and afraid to enter a scratch and win competition from a renowned hamburger restaurant.

Below are the results;

19 December 1982: 0-6
17 December 1983: 5-0
19 December 1990: 0-8
13 March 1991: 1-0
25 March 1995: 4-0
11 October 1995: 0-4

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198 Carmel Baldachino, Il Futbol Malti (Publikazjoni Indipendenza, 1999)
199 Retrieved on 20 April 2013 from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUktyBQ30mw

52
Illustration 22 – Malta 0 - 8 Netherlands, 19 December 1990. (Cor Mulder)

Marco Van Basten celebrating one of his 5 goals against Malta at the European Championship qualifier game at Ta Qali Stadium.\textsuperscript{201}

Illustration 23 – Netherlands 4 – 0 Malta, 25 March 1995. (Cor Mulder)

Dutch winger Marc Overmars pushes his way through defenders Edwin Camilleri and Richard Buhagiar during at De Kuip stadium in Rotterdam.\textsuperscript{202}

\textsuperscript{201} Cor Mulder  \textit{ANP Historisch Archief Community}  19 December 1990
The Maltese National Football team met Belgium only once in a friendly match and recorded a historic victory. The two sides met on 16 February 1994 at Ta Qali Stadium. Ironically enough, it was the Belgium based international Carmel Busuttil who scored the goal against the Belgians. This was considered to be the first time a Maltese National squad defeated a team of a higher calibre.\footnote{Retrieved on 21 March 2013 from \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5WkcEDkQI4}}

The first contract with a European nation for any Maltese professional football player, was Belgium. Carmel Busuttil who is considered Malta’s Golden Player spent six years playing in the Belgian top league with KRC Genk\footnote{Retrieved on 21 March 2013 from \url{http://www.krcgenk.be}} from the period of 1988 to 1994.\footnote{Retrieved on 21 March 2013 from \url{http://www.uefa.com/memberassociations/association=mlt/news/newsid=214820.html}} In Belgium Carmel Busuttil became the club’s top scorer for three consecutive seasons while reaching the tally of 57 goals.\footnote{Ibid} Without any doubt Carmel Busuttil can be considered the ideal sportsman who aspires not only to pursue his/her sport career in Belgium but also in any foreign nation. Moreover, Busuttil has established himself as a notable player amongst the history of Belgium’s foreign players.\footnote{Carmel Baldachino, \textit{Il-Futbol Malti} (Publikazjoni Indipendenza, 1999), 239}

On 2 June 2012 Malta played away to Luxembourg. A number of Maltese nationals residing in Belgium and Luxembourg attended the game and gave their full support to the Maltese National side which won the game 2-0.\footnote{Retrieved on 21 March 2013 from \url{http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20120603/football/Mifsud-brace-ensures-dream-start-for-Ghedin.422576}} Moreover, on 3 June 2012, Airmalta together with the help of the Embassy of Malta in Brussels and the Permanent Representation of Malta to the EU, organised two teams: Malta and Gozo, to take part in a one day tournament organised by the International School of Brussels. The Maltese team, composed mostly of Maltese, eventually won the tournament.\footnote{Retrieved on 25 March 2013 from \url{http://foreign.gov.mt/default.aspx?MDIS=354&NWID=3965}}
Illustration 24 – Maltese expatriates giving their support

Maltese supporters during the game against Luxembourg at the Joey Barthel Stadium, 2 June 2012.

Illustration 25 – The Malta team at the International School of Brussels tournament

The Maltese team went on to win the tournament, 3 June 2012
Chapter 8 - Maltese Communities in the Benelux

8:1 - The Maltese Community in Belgium

The European Union has changed the way Maltese emigrants look at Belgium. Prior to Malta’s accession, Belgium was quite an unpopular destination for Maltese migrant workers. After Malta’s accession the situation became very different, with several Maltese nationals working with the different EU institutions, with Brussels being the centre stage of such activity.

Figure 1

The column graph above\textsuperscript{210} shows the timeline of Maltese expatriates in Belgium. The number of Maltese residing in Belgium during 2001 was a mere 71. By 2004, the year of accession the number rose to 133. Four years into Malta’s accession in 2008, the figure almost doubles to 252. The demand for Maltese working in Brussels

\textsuperscript{210} Eurostat Annual Immigration Statistics, retrieved on 10 April 2013 from http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do
keeps getting even higher so much so, that by 2012, the number of Maltese living in Belgium reaches 413. Based on a separate study based on questionnaires, it becomes more evident that the EU is the prime reason for Maltese to emigrate to Belgium. In fact there were some expatriates who stated that they had been working with the European Union prior to Malta’s accession as early as 1996. With regard to those who claimed that the reason for residing in Belgium was not because of the EU, the reasons primarily ranged from being a diplomat, to being unemployed, and to working with a private firm.

**Figure 2**

Maltese living in Belgium according to age

- 85 years over
- 80 to 84 years
- 75 to 79 years
- 70 to 74 years
- 65 to 69 years
- 60 to 64 years
- 55 to 59 years
- 50 to 54 years
- 45 to 49 years
- 40 to 44 years
- 35 to 39 years
- 30 to 34 years
- 25 to 29 years
- 20 to 24 years
- 15 to 19 years
- 10 to 14 years
- 5 to 9 years
- Less than 5 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Maltese</th>
</tr>
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<td>85 years over</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>80 to 84 years</td>
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<td>75 to 79 years</td>
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<td>65 to 69 years</td>
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<td>60 to 64 years</td>
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<td>40 to 44 years</td>
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<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above\textsuperscript{211} divides the different age groups in Belgium. The highest number belongs to the age group from 30 to 34 years, with 82 people. The second age group is that from 35 to 39 years with 62 residents. Scoring high numbers of expatriates are the age groups of 25 to 29, and 40 to 44, consisting of 44 and 42 residents respectively. In a separate study based on the same survey the majority of the Maltese working in Belgium claimed to be working with the EU institutions, though there are also others who stated that their work had nothing to do with EU. The age of those who stated to work with the EU institutions mostly ranged from 30 to 50 years. Those who belonged to the group over 50 years of age were either working with an EU institution or else with a private firm.

\textsuperscript{211} Eurostat Annual Immigration Statistics, retrieved on 10 April 2013 from http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do
The bar chart above shows the different sizes of each community belonging to all the EU member states residing in Belgium by 2012. The largest community belongs to Italy with 159,730 inhabitants, followed by France and Netherlands with 150,000, and 141,191 inhabitants respectively. The smallest community from all the member

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states is the Maltese one with 413 inhabitants.\textsuperscript{213} The largest communities in Belgium are all from Catholic countries being Italy, France, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain. Despite sharing no borders with Belgium, Italy still remains the largest EU community.

**8:2 - The short lived Association**

In 2006 an association of Maltese living in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg was formed.\textsuperscript{214} The association had also launched a website in April of the same year. The aim of the association was to try and connect all the Maltese residing in the three countries through a website serving as a tool of communication. In fact the “Maltese in Benelux association” had organised a social activity with 60 Maltese residents attending.\textsuperscript{215} From the start it became clear though, that the members of the association mostly lived in Belgium and not in the Netherlands. It could also be said that the association was formed abruptly due to the dramatic increase in Maltese nationals working or studying in Belgium in the summer of 2006. The association’s main aim was to serve as a vocal point in order to give advice to any newcomer who wanted to settle there. Moreover, the reason for the association being formed was to keep Maltese informed of what was happening back on the island.

Due to the fact that many started to return back to Malta and new Maltese nationals arrived, the association practically fizzled out. The ones who had formed the association were temporary migrants and did not settle there but only stayed for a short time. Moreover, the association was formed too early and in fact it was to take a further three years for settled expats to start a new one. It also became quite evident that despite the Benelux countries being close to each other, the Maltese communities in Belgium and the Netherlands weren’t close to each other in that respect. Moreover, help from the Embassy was vital for the association to survive which contrasted with what happened when the first one was formed in 2008, as it

\textsuperscript{213} The Times of Malta, 16 April 2006.
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{215} Ibid.
was not given such help.

8:3 - The Launching of a new Association

An Association for Maltese in Belgium and Luxembourg was launched on Friday 12 February 2010. The venue for the launch of the association was the Belgium branch of the Malta Business Bureau in Avenue d’Auderghem. Around 200 Maltese attended the ceremony with the newly appointed Maltese Commissioner of that time being present as well. One main sponsor of the event was Air Malta which had airlifted approximately more than 200kgs of foodstuffs for the event. This event was organized by the Maltese Embassy to Belgium and Luxembourg. The aim was to keep the Maltese community feeling at home in Belgium and to help them retain Maltese tradition. Maltese Ambassador Pierre Clive Agius illustrated how the launching of the Maltese association was a very important social infrastructure for the Maltese community in Belgium and Luxembourg. This was the largest Maltese expatriate community established since Malta’s accession to the EU. Another principle of the association was to keep the Maltese community in contact with each other through social and cultural activities. One can also notice that the launching of the event might have had positive repercussions within the Maltese community in Belgium as it had strengthened the sense of community amongst the Maltese there.

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218 Ibid.
219 Ibid.
220 Ibid.
Illustration 26 – Launching the Association for Maltese in Belgium and Luxembourg

Centre: Maltese Ambassador, Pierre Clive Agius delivering his speech in 2010, and his left is Secretary General of the Association, Franklin Mamo.
Illustration 27 – Attendance during the launch of the Association

The launch of the Association for Maltese in Belgium and Luxembourg was held at the Malta Business Bureau branch in Brussels, 12 February 2012

Illustration 28 – An Association dinner event, 17 March 2013.
8:4 - The Association for Maltese in Belgium and Luxembourg

According to the ‘27th June 1921 Act passed by the Belgian Parliament on non-profit making associations’ the Association for Maltese in Belgium and Luxembourg is strictly non profitable and it should abide by Belgian law.221 In fact the Association’s aim is to keep the Maltese living in Belgium in contact with each other and give full assistance to them while they are adapting to the Belgian way of life and safeguarding Maltese interests there.222 The Association has a very organized body with the President being Natushka Mulvaney while the Secretary General is Franklin Mamo.223 The Association has its own General Assembly, Council of Administration and a Statue. The statute has 38 articles and is written in French.224 The Office is registered at Avenue des Villas 55A/15, 1060 Brussels. The number of staff members can’t be less than four and any person willing to join or aspiring to become a full member should be an adult and reside in Belgium.

221 Translation of the 27th June 1921 Act, available; http://www.aib-net.org/portal/page/portal/AIB_HOME/AIB/Governance/Translation%20of%20Act%20of%201921%20on%20non-profit%20making%20international%20associations.pdf


223 Ibid.

8:5 - The Community in the Netherlands

The number of Maltese residing in the Netherlands by 2013 is about 200.225 The official number during the year 2012 was 185.226 Each case of Maltese nationals living there seems to vary, with some who have been living for a very long period of up to 15 years while others lived there for short time and then headed back to Malta. In contrast with the case of Belgium, the Maltese nationals living in Holland are spread in different cities, mostly in Amsterdam, Denst, Maastricht and Utrecht. The reasons for Maltese moving to the Netherlands vary. Some who work in the Netherlands would generally be stationed with Europol, Eurojust, the Organizations for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. In the case of Europol and Eurojust there should be at least one Maltese representative employed. Meanwhile at the International tribunal for Yugoslavia there is a Maltese judge: Carmel Agius, who has been working with this institution for eleven years and was elected Vice-President of the Institution on 17 November 2011.227 The number of Maltese opting to work in the Netherlands is a healthy number, but then again many international firms require a lot of experience from job applicants which many Maltese graduates don't have. A large number of Maltese go to the North Sea, for a short period of time, working on the Oil platforms of Shell and BP.228 Moreover, many Maltese were in the Netherlands for social reasons. Apart from the fact that same-sex marriage is legal in the Netherlands, the city of Amsterdam is a venue for easy accessible drug consumption and prostitution.

225 [Valentino, Martin] Personal Interview [27 November 2012].
226 Eurostat
227 United Nations, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia 'The Vice-President' available; http://www.icty.org/sid/150
228 [Valentino, Martin] Personal Interview [27 November 2012]
The column graph above \(^{229}\) shows the timeline of the Maltese living in the Netherlands. Unlike Belgium and Luxembourg, Maltese migration was quite visible in the Netherlands. Before Malta’s entry into the EU, the largest community in the Benelux was found in the Netherlands with the number consisting of more or less of a 100 people.\(^{230}\) Despite the growth in Maltese migration to the Netherlands after accession, the rise in numbers was not as strong as those felt in Belgium and Luxembourg. The reason is obviously because there are no EU institutions in the Netherlands, even though Malta’s accession did contribute to an increase in numbers. One must also keep in mind though, that these are approximate numbers by Eurostat, and the figures might be slightly higher than they actually are. In fact according to Eurostat there is no Maltese aged over 70 years of age residing in the Netherlands, though in fact there is one particular case of a Maltese aged 75 residing in the Netherlands but he had acquired Dutch citizenship due him residing there for a long time (approximately 50 years). Despite employment being the sole


\(^{230}\) Ibid.
reason behind moving to the Netherlands, there have been many who claimed that employment was not the reason for moving there.

Figure 5

Maltese living in the Netherlands according to age

According to the findings of the Annual Eurostat Immigration Statistics\textsuperscript{231} in the above graph, the highest number of Maltese living in the Netherlands adds up to 30 residents in three age groups which are: 25 to 29 years, 30 to 34 years, and 40 to 44 years. The results of separate research based on a series of questionnaires found that those who are aged approximately from 20 to 25 years are studying at a University or an Institute, while those aged over 25 years are working there. The type of employment taken up is that of researchers, clerks, managers, financial controllers, shop owners, I.T. developers, communications officers, and to a certain extent social workers. All those who are over 60 years, either work in a managerial post or else are retired.

The bar chart above,\textsuperscript{232} shows the different size of communities of all the EU member states living in the Netherlands in 2012. Poland returns a healthy number of 65,086, ranking the second largest community amongst the EU member states. Germany ranks the largest community in the Netherlands with 72,815 inhabitants. The number of Maltese residing in the Netherlands amounts to 185. Compared to Cyprus with 242, and Luxembourg with 373 one could easily conclude that

considering the larger Cypriot population and a close Luxembourgian border, the amount of Maltese residing in the Netherlands is quite high, suggesting chances of future growth in the future, even though Malta is the smallest member state of the EU.

The Association of Maltese living in Belgium is fit to be called an organised form of community but in the case of the Netherlands the community is not that well formulated. Founded in 2009 by a Maltese living in the Netherlands, there happens to be a keen interest in a social network group which is called “Maltese (Maltesers) in the Netherlands” which is open to anyone who lives or had lived in the Netherlands. 233 There was another similar group created back in the 90’s but the group just stopped creating events and ceased to exist. 234 The group “Maltesers in the Netherlands” actively organises social activities like dinners, lunches and boat trips in order to keep social interaction between Maltese residing in the Netherlands. In fact the location of the events is always different in order for the group to reach everyone. As a result many of the members don’t bother travelling to attend the events when the location is far away. 235 The only factors which seems to get in the way for the community in the Netherlands is the weather, and the fact that the expatriates are spread across the country. The embassy also organises social activities, such as receptions. 236 Despite the fact that the community in the Netherlands can’t be ranked as an association, it seems to stay loyal to its origins by literally being a community.

233 [Attard, Claire] Personal Interview. [7 February 2013].
234 Ibid.
235 Ibid.
Illustration 29 – Dutch stamp with the map of Malta in the background.

The stamp was issued on 1 May 2004, on Malta’s entry to the European Union.²³⁷

²³⁷ Museum of Communications, The Hague, Netherlands, [NVPH-2264]
8:6 - The Community in Luxembourg

Luxembourg attracts several workers from all the EU member states because of its EU institutions set up for translation. As we shall see in the charts below, like other European member states, Maltese emigration to Luxembourg has increased solely because of the translation services. The association for Maltese living in Belgium includes also the Maltese who reside in Luxembourg.

Figure 7

The figures above\textsuperscript{238} show that there is an ever increasing community in Luxembourg solely because of Malta’s accession to the European Union. In 2001 the Maltese population in Luxembourg was only 14.\textsuperscript{239} By 2007 the number increases to 169, and in the following year the figure continues to go up to 190.\textsuperscript{240}

\textsuperscript{239} Ibid
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid.
One can’t expect the largest community to be in Luxembourg due to the fact that the country is very small with the Luxembourg population amounting to 500,000.²⁴¹ The Maltese population in Luxembourg is over 225.²⁴² Despite the number in itself being encouraging for such a small nation, the community is even larger due the fact that many have opted to live on the borders of Belgium and Germany to avoid the high cost of living, yet still from part of the community.

The bar chart on the next page²⁴³ shows the different size of communities from all the EU member states living in Luxembourg in 2012. The first impression is that of a big Portuguese community with 76,586 inhabitants, but this is not new for Luxembourg since the Portuguese have been migrating to Luxembourg since the twentieth century. The second largest community is French with 25,562 inhabitants, which can be explained due to the close geographical ties. Third are the Italians, who once again as in Belgium returns a big community of 19,065.

²⁴² Retrieved on 13 April from http://www.akkuzza.com/2013/03/17/talking-about-us/
²⁴³ Museum of Communications, the Hague, Netherlands.
Figure 8

EU Communities living in Luxembourg

- United Kingdom
- Sweden
- Spain
- Slovenia
- Slovakia
- Romania
- Portugal
- Poland
- Netherlands
- Malta
- Lithuania
- Latvia
- Italy
- Ireland
- Hungary
- Greece
- Germany
- France
- Finland
- Estonia
- Denmark
- Czech Republic
- Cyprus
- Bulgaria
- Belgium
- Austria

0 10,000 20,000 30,000 40,000 50,000 60,000 70,000 80,000 90,000
8:7 - An Analysis of the Contemporary situation

On the whole there is a significant increase in the number of Maltese living in the Benelux, with the three Benelux countries marking a remarkable increase. From all the three, Belgium registers the largest Maltese community mainly because of the EU institutions based in Brussels. One factor worth mentioning is the fact that Malta can also be perceived as being part of the Southern European wave of migration residing in the Benelux together with the Italians and Portuguese. Figures and statistics have continuously shown that when Maltese migration to the Benelux, especially Belgium, was going strong, so were those of other Southern European countries.

From a series of questionnaires conducted amongst Maltese nationals residing in the Benelux one can formulate what lifestyles the Maltese have and the problems they are facing. When it came to the Maltese living in Belgium, 75% of those who answered the survey stated that they felt welcome in Belgium, but this contrasted with those who reside in the Netherlands, since there has been a mixed response; both positive and negative. The positive comments included half of the interviewees saying that they are treated as other Europeans, while the negative comments included others claiming to be frequently discriminated against with some adding that they have serious integration problems. When asked how they have been perceived and what the impressions locals have on them, many claimed to have been confused with Greeks, Spaniards or Italians. There have also been cases when the Maltese have been thought to be either Arab, Turk, or British. On the whole, the Maltese community is still too small for the locals of the Benelux to have a fixed or known impression about the Maltese since many Dutch, Belgian and Luxembourgian citizens still don’t know where Malta is.

When asked about the wages they receive and the standard of living, on the whole many seem to be coping well. The participants argued that considering the high standard of living which is present in the Benelux countries, the wages aren’t high, but they are still acceptable. About 37% claimed that the taxes were too high to allow one to save money, the remaining 60% claimed that they were doing well due
to the high wages which compensate for the taxes, while the remaining 3% refrained from answering, or else misunderstood the question. Despite the mixed response, when it came to wages, 65% argued that on the whole, the Benelux region offers a good quality of life, mainly because of the efficiency in Government services, healthcare and education. Those who lived in Belgium systematically replied that the country offers a better standard of living than Malta. When it came to those living in the Netherlands, there were different answers, even if over 60% still preferred the Netherlands to Malta. The reason for some having a negative impression of the Dutch standard of living was the high prices of food, and that they cannot afford to buy as many clothes as they used to.

The challenges expats face vary from weather conditions to social issues. Frequently pointed out reasons for affecting the interviewee’s opinion of the country residing in was the cold weather. The language also was a problem for those who do not know French or Dutch, because it triggers other issues such as job employment, problems with making new friends and discrimination. In fact an impressive 75% know at least one native language to eliminate such problems and thus make integration much easier. Travelling has also been suggested as a problem especially when making use of an Airmalta flight, which is too expensive. Others pointed out that some cultural differences are a problem as well. These differences included the punctuality of the locals, which contrasts to the lack of punctuality of Southern Europeans. One ironic comment worth mentioning was that Maltese food was one thing surely missed.

Many of the expats seem to have laid their eyes on the Benelux countries. Approximately 44% of those who participated in the survey seemed to be willing to settle there since they have found a career and a type of life which they do not want to leave. Moreover, the Benelux seems to offer many Maltese the “European dream”, due to several well paid jobs which can be found in the Benelux countries and also at other borders.

About 40% wished to return to Malta since they claimed to have missed their home country. Reasons for returning back were mainly for retirement prospects. Some do
miss Malta though, for the reason that the home country offers unique traits not found anywhere else, such as climate and cuisine. On the whole, the Maltese presence in the Benelux was not only alive in past decades but is also increasing.

**Illustration 30 – Message during the Belgian winter**

Photo taken during the Belgian winter of 2013. Someone anonymous left a simple message on a windscreen of a car which was photographed by a passerby and uploaded the photograph on a social network site.
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